

What is the Difference between Latent TB Infection (LTBI) and TB Disease?

With latent TB infection, the TB germs are asleep in your body and you do not feel sick.

- Your chest x-ray is usually normal and you cannot spread TB to others.
- You can take medicine for your TB infection to keep you from getting sick with active TB disease.

With TB disease, the TB germs are actively growing.

- You usually feel sick and have an abnormal chest x-ray.
- If the TB germs are in your lungs or throat, you can spread TB to other people by coughing, sneezing, talking or singing.
- You will need to take several medicines for many months to treat active TB disease.



If you are at risk for TB infection or disease, getting a TB blood test or TB skin test is very important.

If you have questions, please contact:

www.vdh.virginia.gov/tb

Virginia Department of Health
Tuberculosis Control Program
109 Governor Street, 3rd floor
Richmond, VA 23219
Phone: 804-864-7906
Fax: 804-371-0248

May 2013

A Blood Test for Tuberculosis Infection



What You Should Know

VDH VIRGINIA
DEPARTMENT
OF HEALTH
Protecting You and Your Environment

What is a Tuberculosis (TB) Blood Test?

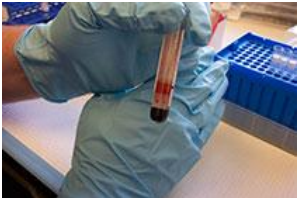
The TB blood test (also called interferon-gamma release assay or IGRA) is a way to find out if you have TB germs in your body. The TB blood test can be done instead of a TB skin test (TST). There are two kinds of TB blood tests available:

- QuantiFERON®-TB
- T-SPOT®.TB

Do I Need a TB Test?

Talk to your health care provider about getting a TB test if you:

- Have been in close contact with someone who has active TB disease,
 - Have HIV-infection or a weakened immune system,
 - Have symptoms of TB disease such as fever, night sweats, cough, or weight loss,
 - Have lived in a country where many people have TB,
 - Live or work in a nursing home, clinic, hospital, prison or homeless shelter,
- OR**
- Use illegal drugs



Should I Get a TB Blood Test or Skin Test?

In most cases, you can have either a TB blood test or a TB skin test (TST). Children 5 years or younger should have the TB skin test instead of the TB blood test. For others, the choice of which test to use will be based on your personal situation.

You only need to make one visit to have your blood drawn for the TB blood test. With a TB skin test, you need two visits. The first visit is to place the skin test. You need to return to your health care provider 48 to 72 hours later to have the skin test read.

If you need a TB test, talk to your health care provider about whether the TB blood test or skin test is best for you.



How Can I Get a TB Blood Test?

Ask your health care provider if the blood test is available. If it is offered, a health care worker will draw a small amount of blood and send it to a laboratory for testing.

You may need to go to a laboratory for this test. Your health care provider will let you know the results from the laboratory, which usually takes a few days.

What are Differences Between the TB Skin Test (TST) and the TB Blood test or IGRA?

A Comparison	TST	IGRA
Use to detect TB infection	Yes	Yes
Use to diagnose TB disease	No	No
Need 1 patient visit	No	Yes
Is less costly	Yes	No
Better for those with BCG history	No	Yes
Use with children under age 5	Preferred	Use with caution

What if My TB Blood Test is Positive?

If your TB blood test is positive, you probably have TB germs in your body. It is likely that you have TB infection. Your health care provider will examine you and send you for a chest x-ray. You may need more tests depending on the results of the chest x-ray.